GISette
Email Newsletter

December 2006

Welcome to the twenty-third edition of the **MassGIS GISette,** a bi-monthly newsletter e-mailed to over 1200 of our users and partner agencies to keep them informed of data updates, GIS events, and on-going technology developments. This newsletter will not replace more focused e-mails that many of you currently receive. A page on our website has been created for the GISette. There you will find back issues of the GISette and an online subscription form.

While our primary intent in publishing the GISette is to disseminate information related to MassGIS initiatives and data development in particular, we also see the GISette as a means of communicating public agency GIS news. So we encourage readers to send in updates or announcements concerning public agencies that they would like included in the GISette. We particularly want to encourage submission of announcements concerning data development projects. Announcements should be sent to Paul Nutting at paul.nutting@state.ma.us.

Strategic Plan for Massachusetts' Spatial Data Infrastructure

This is a reminder that MassGIS is holding six workshops around the Commonwealth to seek your input for this important project. If you do plan on attending a workshop, please RSVP for a specific workshop location to paul.nutting@state.ma.us; this will enable us to a) let you know about any weather-related cancellation and b) send you a short list of questions that we will be asking you to consider.

We realize that you are busy, but this is an important opportunity for you to influence this planning process. The workshop dates and locations are:

January 9, 8:45 – 12:45, Pittsfield
January 11, 8:45 – 12:45, West Springfield
January 16, 8:30 – 12:30, Lawrence
January 17, 8:30 – 12:30, Auburn
January 23, 8:30 - 12:30, Wareham
January 24, 8:30 – 12:30, Boston

For more information about this strategic plan, including information about and directions to the workshop locations, please visit http://www.mass.gov/mgis/stratplan.html. Thank you!

Web Site WIKI Now Open to Everyone

MassGIS now invites anyone to use its web mapping services! (Previously, the policy was to restrict their use to government projects). A new Web site wiki has been created with a wide variety of content to help users get familiar with the web services. On the site are tutorials, sample requests, and tips and tricks. More content from MassGIS will follow, and we invite users to add their own useful information, particularly about how the web services work within various types of software, from ArcMap to Google Earth.

What can be done with web mapping services? Data can be incorporated into many types of programs - from a user's desktop application to a Web application. The data is streamed from the MassGIS server in real time. There is no need for the extra steps of downloading a shapefile to use locally, and the data is always the most up-to-date. Datalayers can be drawn and queried (get information about a feature, find features with certain types of qualities), addresses can be mapped (geocoding), and points can be converted from one projection to another (for example, latitude and longitude to state plane). The MassGIS Web services make it easier to incorporate a mapping component into desktop or web applications.

If you have any questions about the MassGIS Web mapping services, feel free to email Aleda.Freeman@state.ma.us or Saul.Farber@state.ma.us. In addition, if taking a class to learn more about Web services fits your needs, there is an opportunity this spring. Saul will be teaching an evening class at UMass Boston on learning about the WMS and WFS specifications in detail, and how to apply them to your web-mapping projects. Contact Saul for further details.

What's in a Phrase?

In announcing our upcoming Strategic Plan workshops, MassGIS listed 4 GIS data "categories" that would be the focus of those workshops. That list included reference to "property boundaries". Since releasing the workshop announcement, members of the Massachusetts Association of Land Surveyors and Civil Engineers (MALSCE) have pointed out that the phrases "property boundaries" or "property lines" should be used only to refer to property boundary mapping prepared by a Professional Land Surveyor (PLS). The boundaries shown on an Assessor's map should be referred to as Assessor's parcel lines.

They are absolutely correct on this point - in depicting the boundaries of land ownership on maps, it is important to differentiate between "authoritative locations" (i.e., those that can only be determined by a PLS) and representations of boundaries suitable for general identification of ownership, relative orientation, preliminary site planning, resource management, conservation planning and other such uses that do not require a legally authoritative boundary determination. While this may seem both obvious and minor, members of the general public often do not understand the distinction. As that misunderstanding may have financial or legal repercussions for users of the data, it is important that GIS professionals not only understand the difference, but help educate the public about it. MassGIS recommends that municipalities producing maps using GIS software, whether paper or on-line, extend their standard disclaimers to include the statement: "Individuals requiring an authoritative property boundary or other location must retain the services of a professional land surveyor".

MassGIS will be working to update its website to reflect the distinctions in this terminology. An interesting further discussion of this issue in the broader context of professional ethics and map accuracy can be found in this article.

Database Updates

- **DEP Wetlands (1:12,000) Data Updated - State Complete!** - 12/22/2006
  The final missing piece of the DEP Wetlands layer, a small area in the towns of Ayer and Harvard, has been filled in, and the entire state is now complete! For more information, please see the Datalayer Description, which includes links to free data download and an online wetlands map viewer.

- **Title 5 Layer Updated** - 12/26/06
  Tiles for the Merrimack and Nashua watersheds were updated in conjunction with the completion of the DEP Wetlands (1:12,000) layer. In August, tiles for all watersheds on the ftp site were replaced with new data as the Title 5 layer was modified to include intermittent streams within Zone C's.

- **2 NHESP Layers Updated** - 12/11/2006
  The NHESP Priority Habitats and Estimated Habitats were amended in the towns of Lancaster and Truro on December 1, 2006. These modifications are to the recent September update.

- **Schools Layer Updated** - 11/27/2006
  The Schools (pre-kindergarten to high school) layer has been updated. There is a net gain of 48 school points. The layer is up-to-date through August 3, 2006.

- **MassDEP Oil and/or Hazardous Material Sites with Activity and Use Limitations (AUL) Layer Updated** - 11/14/2006
  Updates made by MassDEP included 3 added sites.

- **C21e Layer Updated** - 11/14/2006
  DEP GIS Group has updated the Tier Classified Chapter 21E Sites datalayer. The update included: 37 sites added and 119 removed.

What's New on the MassGIS Web Site

- **Recapping GIS Day 2006 - 11/21/2006**
  See pictures from the November 16, 2006 event in Great Hall at the State House.

- **Updated Municipal GIS and Parcel Status Maps - 11/7/2006**
  These maps, updated as of November, 2006, display the status of GIS and Digital Assessor Parcel Lines Development across the Commonwealth.

MassGIS participating in the USGS National Map Viewer

Certain MassGIS datalayers are now being streamed to the USGS National Map Viewer (http://nmviewogc.cr.usgs.gov/Run.htm) from the MassGIS Web mapping services. Layers can be drawn and identified. (We're still working with USGS on getting legends and downloading to work).

Technical Details Corner

MassGIS has deployed its vector data in GeoServer 1.5. We are working on getting GeoServer to work with SDE rasters (imagery). We plan to port OLIVER to GeoServer soon.

Events, Announcements and Staffing

MEMA Needs Your Help at the Community Level

eCEMP, the online electronic Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan for each town, has GIS layers for download. Are you aware the program houses over 20,000 points statewide with layers such as Infrastructure, Vulnerable Locations and many more? Contact your Community Emergency Management Director (EMD) for access to eCEMP (http://www.mass.gov/MEMA under Key Resources). It's easy access to online mapping! Work with your community EMD to maintain and update these layers. It is the place to start!

Questions regarding eCemp: Rob.Sousa@state.ma.us
Questions about MEMA GIS: Johanna.meyer@state.ma.us

Any comments or suggestions about the GISette are welcomed at paul.nutting@state.ma.us.

MassGIS-The Commonwealth's Office of Geographic and Environmental Information is located within the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and is charged with the collection, enhancement, storage and dissemination of the Commonwealth's geographic data.

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Office of Geographic and Environmental Information

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